



stop crying



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Chapter 1 by Melvin Marquez

"When I was a puppy, I entertained you with my antics and made you laugh. You called me your child and despite a number of chewed shoes and a couple of murdered throw pillows, I became your best friend. Whenever I was "bad," you'd shake your finger at me and ask "How could you?" - but then you'd relent and roll me over for a bellyrub.

My housetraining took a little longer than expected, because you were terribly busy, but we worked on that together. I remember those nights of nuzzling you in bed, listening to your confidences and secret dreams, and I believed that life could not be any more perfect. We went for long walks and runs in the park, car rides, stops for ice cream (I only got the cone because "ice cream is bad for dogs," you said), and I took long naps in the sun waiting for you to come home at the end of the day.

Gradually, you began spending more time at work and on your career, and more time searching for a human mate. I waited for you patiently, comforted you through heartbreaks and disappointments, never chided you about bad decisions, and romped with glee at your homecomings, and when you fell in love.

She, now your wife, is not a "dog person" - still I welcomed her into our home, tried to show her affection, and obeyed her. I was happy because you were happy. Then the human babies came along and I shared your excitement. I was fascinated by their pinkness, how they smelled, and I wanted to mother them, too. Only she and you worried that I might hurt them, and I spent most of my time banished to another room, or to a dog crate. Oh, how I wanted to love them, but I

became a prisoner of love.

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As they began to grow, I became a bit more of a dog person and pulled themselves up on wobbly legs, poked finger in my nose, and gave me kisses on my nose. I loved everything about them, especially their smell. You and I were now so infrequent, and I would have defended them with my life if need be.

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I would sneak into their beds and listen to their worries and secret dreams. Together we waited for the sound of your car in the driveway. There had been a time, when others asked you if you had a dog, that you produced a photo of me from your wallet and told them stories about me. These past few years, you just answered "yes" and changed the subject. I had gone from being your dog to "just a dog," and you resented every expenditure on my behalf.

Now you have a new career opportunity in another city and you and they will be moving to an apartment that does not allow pets. You've made the right decision for your "family," but there was a time when I was your only family.

I was excited about the car ride until we arrived at the animal shelter. It smelled of dogs and cats, of fear, of hopelessness. You filled out the paperwork and said "I know you will find a good home for her." They shrugged and gave you a pained look. They understand the realities facing a middle-aged dog or cat, even one with "papers."

You had to pry your son's fingers loose from my collar as he screamed "No, Daddy! Please don't let them take my dog!" And I worried for him and what lessons you had just taught him about friendship and loyalty, about love and responsibility, and about respect for all life. You gave me a goodbye pat on the head, avoided my eyes, and politely refused to take my collar and leash with you. You had a deadline to meet and now I have one, too.

After you left, the two nice ladies said you probably knew about your upcoming move months ago and made no attempt to find me another good home. They shook their heads and asked "How could you?"

They are as attentive to us here in the shelter as their busy schedules allow. They feed us, of course, but I lost my appetite days ago. At first, whenever anyone passed my pen, I rushed to the front, hoping it was you - that you had changed your mind - that this was all a bad dream...or I hoped it would at least be someone who cared, anyone who might save me. When I realized I could not compete with the frolicking for attention of happy puppies, oblivious to their own

late, I retreated to a far corner and waited.

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I heard her footsteps as she came. I looked up and I padded along the aisle after her to a separate room. As I followed her, I felt a small, warm, and I rubbed my ears and told me not to worry. My heart pounded in my chest. I knew she was coming, but there was also a sense of relief. The person of love had run out of days. As is my nature, I was more concerned

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about her. The burden which she bears weighs heavily on her and I know that, the same way I knew your every mood.

She gently placed a tourniquet around my foreleg as a tear ran down her cheek. I licked

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